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S E C R E T THE HAGUE 000381

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2014

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: DUTCH ON PRTS

REF: A. STATE 30871

[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 248

[1](#)C. THE HAGUE 281

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD M. SOBEL FOR REASONS 1
.5 (B AND D).

[1](#)1. (S) PM Balkenende's Foreign Policy Advisor Rob Swartbol informed Amb. Sobel on February 12 that, following FM Bot's trip to Washington, the Dutch government was actively considering participating in a PRT in Afghanistan. The options under consideration include possibly joining the Germans, Scandinavians, or British in their operations. Separately, Dutch MOD J-3 Air Commodore Pieter Cobelens informed DATT also on February 12 that FM Bot and Defense Minister Kamp are expected to meet on February 20 to discuss Dutch PRT participation and possible deployment of SOF to Afghanistan in support of OEF. As reported ref B, there remains stronger support for the latter option within the uniformed services. Dutch MOD and MFA action levels remain noncommittal towards possible Dutch PRT participation.

[1](#)2. (S) Comment: When the defense and foreign affairs ministers meet, they will be balancing a desire to do their fair share in Afghanistan against some deep seated concerns in parliament and government. As noted Ref C, the idea of a PRT conjures for some the worst memories of Srebrenica. If the Dutch government is to gain consensus to participate in a PRT, it will have to ease these concerns, especially about in extremis extraction. This week, the government saw some encouraging signs in parliament: leaders they sounded out were more positive towards a PRT than expected, and parliament easily concurred with the government's decision to deploy Apache helicopters in Afghanistan. The government will also have to overcome concerns about costs, including from powerful Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm. As one MFA official said after FM Bot's visit to Washington, the GONL was "not negative" on taking on a PRT, but "there's a lot to be clarified." The top levels of the Dutch government seem more energized than a week ago, but this is a process of trying to build consensus.

SOBEL